

# THE ISRAELI SPHERE

Israel continues to grow and develop in arts and innovation, and its society is more vibrant than ever. What will affect the tomorrow of Israeli society? Will arts and culture, entrepreneurship and innovation be the central motifs that are associated with Israel of the future? Will the riches of the natural gas discoveries impact Israeli society for the better? Or will the divisions within and between communities lead to internal conflict or open a discourse for the betterment of society for all?

## Art and Culture: The Bridges of Tomorrow's World.

Can song bridge the differences between Israel and Iran? Can comedy ease the tension between Jews and Arabs in Israel? Can design and architecture create a language of common interchange? Leading Israeli artists discussed these questions and more.

**James Snyder**<sup>1</sup> moderated the session and framed it, with the example of the Israel Museum, as a discussion about bridging and of overcoming gaps. He presented the speakers as "people from here but not from here" indicating that their backgrounds allowed them to bridge various social and political gaps. Snyder presented the Museum as "connecting cultures across time and across geography" and had the panelists share their experiences as artists bridging gaps.

For **Norman Issa**<sup>2</sup> art starts from pain and then you make the bridge with people with whom you want to fix the suffering. He spoke of his childhood in Haifa, where he and his siblings used imagination as the only source for games. "This is what we lose as adults. We lose our childhoods and then we can't speak to each other. But children—it doesn't matter if you're Arab, Jewish—you play with each other" and we have to get this back. We must create a language of creativity in order to connect with each other.

**Rita**<sup>3</sup> spoke about her bridge-building with Iran through her latest Persian language album "My Joys." She recounted how shocked she was by the strong response from Iran—one person even writing her that he wants to come see her concert in Israel even if the punishment is three years in jail and 70 whiplashes. When she performed at the UN General Assembly Hall, Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon

told her "that art has an incredible role in building bridges and that many revolutions start from music and it is a place that politicians can't enter."

On hearing the Beatles song "Strawberry Fields," **Ron Arad**<sup>4</sup> thinks of Tel Aviv, not Liverpool. Everyone is trapped in the place and language that they were born into, he explained, but working in England has given him the freedom of an outsider. His work "720 Degrees" was inspired by a round house across the street from his studio, the concept is a curtain with a seamless projection - a mirror image on both the internal and external parts of the ring. He saw Tel Aviv as the natural place to exhibit it, but was asked to put it up in Jerusalem and this produced exponentially more power when dropped in a new landscape.

**Dorit Rabinyan**<sup>5</sup> explained that as a novelist she aims to deliver truth, pain and joy, and that one has to ignore the outside world in order to deliver that truth. Born in Israel with parents from Iran, she would have preferred having only one culture to belong to, but the paradox was that it was the story of her grandmother, a Persian story from Iran, written in Hebrew that opened the door for her into the heart of Israeliness.

**Robert De Niro**<sup>6</sup> offered in his "One on One" session with **Udi Segal**<sup>7</sup> a different point on the arts as an American actor. "Movies are a collective dream situation for the public" to identify with as a sort of "release." He regarded politicians, who represent different parts of society as inherently actors, as they must have at least a bit of theatricality to them but he would not be able to be a politician because leaders must often suffer the "onslaught." They hold a hard position, and need the "skin" to withstand the criticism.

## The Tomorrow of Israeli Society: Between Unity and Division

With the gaps between the periphery and the center, the tensions between Arabs and Jews, the intensifying debate between secular and Orthodox Jews, the sense of deprivation the poor versus the status of the wealthy, and the differences in the integration of native-born Israelis and new immigrants, can Israel continue to "create miracles" despite internal tensions that are becoming more and more complex?

**Ari Shavit**<sup>8</sup> opened by saying that there is no tomorrow without a past. "Before there was a reality in Israel, there was a strong story." The story is now crumbling and throughout the years Israel split into right and left, secular

and religious blaming each other. Additionally Israel became a technological, economic privatized state. Israel has the successful story of a startup nation, but our main challenge is to create a new unified story and elite to lead us.

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) plays a social role in Israeli society as it gathers young men and women of various socio-economic backgrounds, as they serve their country. The IDF's main mission is to protect the State of Israel, but it also contributes to the integration of members of Israel's numerous sub-societies, pointed out **Maj. Gen. Orna Barbivai**<sup>9</sup>. The IDF creates new leaders who influence the army and the State and gives equal opportunity to everyone, such as Ethiopians and the ultra-Orthodox.

"To have a State you need to think and consider the needs of others and not just yourself," stated **Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz**<sup>10</sup>, insisting on the importance of dialogue, because otherwise we will get nowhere in our debates on the complex issues we face today. On the topic of the Western Wall, a place with so many feelings and beliefs connected to it, he asserted that it is considered a holy place for prayer and that men and women don't pray together in synagogue and that he doesn't have the power to change Jewish law—"you have to find out what your father did and observe that, and then maybe we can live together." Rabinowitz regarded the drafting of ultra-Orthodox to the IDF and said that those who don't study Torah should be drafted and that this will in turn, help them integrate in the labor market.

On the issue of Israeli Arabs and the IDF draft, **Aiman Saif**<sup>11</sup> said that they don't serve because of their feelings towards the Palestinians but pointed out that they do civil service instead and that there needs to be more budget in order to integrate them into Israeli society. There are huge gaps between Arabs and Jews in Israel: Israeli Arabs are 20% of the population but contribute only 8% to the national economy. This is a failure of the Israeli society when educated Arabs become teachers instead of going into hi-tech. The government is trying to increase budgets and they are working on a plan to integrate 500 Arab teachers into Jewish schools. This project will promote co-existence, which is imperative for both populations, as they are alienated from one another. Overcoming this alienation will bring mutual understanding and shared knowledge, which is highly needed.

We must change our discourse on periphery that exists only in our heads, claimed **Ruvik Danilovich**<sup>12</sup>. Real sustainable change occurred in Beer-Sheva and young

men and women are well integrated in new business centers. For him, Israel has great potential, the people need to stop complaining and strong creative leaders, like Ben Gurion, are needed, he said, joining the call of Shavit for the creation of a new elite that can guide the country forward into the future.

## The Land of Milk and Honey... and Natural Gas – Challenges and Opportunities

The discovery of gas fields off Israel's shores raises many questions about the possible implications of Israel becoming an energy producer. This session sought to explore the issues related to Israel's new status and asks questions such as to whom to export; ways to protect gas fields; and how to avoid having the "resource curse," the negative consequences of new wealth, beset the Israeli economy?

**Eliezer (Moodi) Sandberg**<sup>13</sup> requested **Kjell Magne Bondevik**<sup>14</sup> to assume the role of prime minister of Israel and conjure a plan regarding the natural gas discovered in Israel. Bondevik's recommendations were to keep in mind a long term commitment, and consider the environment, as the gas is non-renewable. To confront this, he suggested adopting the model of the Norwegian Petroleum Fund. Another recommendation was to establish a permanent approach regarding taxation that cannot be changed between elections.

**Edward Chow**<sup>15</sup> agreed that the decisions made regarding natural gas need to be long term ones. He explained that the difference between the gas and oil businesses are that oil responds to market trends, while gas is considered a commodity, and "if a decision isn't made in a timely manner, it will go to waste." He also raised the controversial issue of the Shared Gas Resolution, regarding gas export to Non-FTA (Free Trade Agreement) countries, and said that when contemplating export, it is imperative to ask "how much?" and "to where?" as export can be economically and also potentially politically beneficial.

For **Gideon Tadmor**<sup>16</sup>, the main consequence of the discovery will be that Israel will be energy independent. He agreed with his colleagues about the potential of exporting to neighboring countries saying, "we have the resources, the technical capabilities and window of opportunity. All that we need is to take action."

**Prof. Brenda Shaffer**<sup>17</sup> sees the discovery of natural gas as an opportunity to reduce carbon emission. The export of

gas can be beneficial, but supplying gas can put a country in a vulnerable position: "In many cases the supplier is the one becoming dependent on the market... The supplier and receiver are rarely inter-dependent." "We have an interest that our neighbors produce power in a clean way," she says, as we suffer from their pollution.

Israel's gas resources and market are nothing compared to that of Norway, pointed out **Prof. Eytan Sheshinski**<sup>18</sup> and recommended starting a natural resource fund. "Much of the success or failure of the fund is set in the details." Pointing out the mistakes made in former agreements in Israel, he said: "The question is, did the government receive its fair share from the resources that were franchised to private sectors?" The purpose of a fund is not only to serve future generations, but also to avoid inflation. He concluded that Israel has to examine long term fiscal policies regarding all of its natural resources, such as the Dead Sea and natural water.

## The Makers: When Technology, Creativity and DIY Come Together

When a fruitful dialogue exists between creativity, innovation and technology, the result is the creation of independent and surprising initiatives. This panel introduces the MAKE movement, the new subculture of the Maker Community of independent manufacturers made up of technology experts who have turned to independent creative expression.

**Dr. Yossi Vardi**<sup>19</sup> explained that a maker is a new name for an old phenomenon, people who make things from their imagination. In recent years the increased ease of access to components is aiding people of younger ages to have an outlet for their expressive ideas on materials that are constructed as prototypes.

**Michal Rinott**<sup>20</sup> in collaboration with Shachar Geiger makes objects that interact with people and establish dialogue. They sought to create an object that will induce laughter, their solution came in the form of a swing, the

higher you swing the harder it laughs and the stronger it laughs the stronger you laugh. Other products that they are developing seek ways to build empathy based on the tapping paradigm. One idea is a bicycle designed for two riders that sit face to face, the goal is not to race; rather it is to ride in synchrony. As the riders synchronize a screen in front of them grows richer in color and content.

**Yoav Kleiner**<sup>21</sup> created a complex drawing machine as a hobby, "I thought about it forever until my head blew and then I made it forever." In his prototype small figures of an artist and a model sit on a platform, when a hand-cranked wheel (inspired by a music box) is turned it prompts the artist to draw a nude image of the model with a laser.

"We are planning to land in 2015" informed **Yariv Bash**<sup>22</sup>, founder of Space-IL, a project that aims to send an Israeli spacecraft to the moon. The project has great educational value, reaching more than 33,000 school children. They currently have 23 competing teams working on the spacecraft design, which weighs approximately 140 kg.

**Liat Segal's**<sup>23</sup> work includes green energy collaboration with architects showcased at the Bat Yam Biennale that featured robotic drums mounted on poles that were then blended with live instruments. Other projects include a Cellular Graffiti Printer, that prints a text message sent to a cellular phone attached to a portable prototype printer, described by Segal as "the dance of the marker," the "Originals Machine" is a visual expression of query of four words on Google, that was expanded into a live installation at the "Fresh Paint 5" event in Tel Aviv, the painting created was the result of music translated in real time into squirts of paint in different colors and tempos.

Art and technology combine in the work of **Eyal Gever**<sup>24</sup>. All of his sculptures are the output of a computer simulation. There is no human interference between the data code and the simulation that are printed in micro layers, layer by layer by 3-D printers. Much of his work focuses on moments of movement in nature such as those found in a volcanic eruption, waterfalls or waves, "all those moments, I find them very interesting there is no human touch."

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- 1 Mr. James Snyder is the Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. He was the former Deputy Director of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, a Loeb Fellow and is a graduate of Harvard University and a Loeb Fellow of Harvard's Graduate School of Design.
  - 2 Mr. Norman Issa (Israel) is an actor, director and playwright. He appeared in the films, *My Lovely Sister*, *The Syrian Bride* and *Habitat Bepinat Harechov* and is well-known for his leading role as 'Amjad' for two seasons in the television series *Arab Labor* by Said Kashua.
  - 3 Rita (Israel) is one of Israel's best known and most successful singers.
  - 4 Mr. Ron Arad (Israel) is an industrial designer, artist, and architect and Co-Founder of 'Ron Arad Associates'. He has served as Professor of Design at the Hochschule in Vienna and as Head of the Design Products Department at the Royal College of Art.
  - 5 Ms. Dorit Rabinyan (Israel) is a novelist and a scriptwriter.
  - 6 Mr. Robert De Niro (USA) is an award winning actor, director and producer. He won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Jake LaMotta in the film *Raging Bull* and the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his work in *The Godfather Part II*.
  - 7 Mr. Udi Segal (Israel) is a journalist and the Diplomatic Correspondent of Channel Two News Israel.
  - 8 Mr. Ari Shavit (Israel) is a Senior Correspondent at *Haaretz* Newspaper and a member of its editorial board.
  - 9 Maj. Gen. Orna Barbivai (Israel) is the Head of the Personnel Directorate of the Israeli Defense Forces. She is the first-ever female Major General in the IDF and the second woman to serve on the Chief of Staff's General Staff. Barbivai has served in the IDF for 30 years, devoting her entire army career to the directorate.
  - 10 Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz (Israel) is the Rabbi of the Western Wall and the Holy Sites of Israel and Chairman of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. He serves on the Board of the *Aleh*, an organization for children with disabilities.
  - 11 Mr. Aiman Saif (Israel) is the Director of the Authority for the Economics Development of the Minorities Sector at the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.
  - 12 Mr. Ruvik Danilovich (Israel) is the Mayor of Beer Sheva. He previously served as Deputy Mayor of Beer Sheva and was responsible for the Education Portfolio.
  - 13 Mr. Eliezer (Moodi) Sandberg (Israel) is the World Chairman of Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal. In the past, he served as Minister of National Infrastructure, as a Member of the Economic Cabinet, Minister of Science and Technology, Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Science and Technology, Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Sport.
  - 14 The Hon. Kjell Magne Bondevik (Norway) served as Prime Minister of Norway for two terms of offices as a representative of the Christian Democratic Party (1997-2000, 2001-2005) and is the Founder and President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights.
  - 15 Mr. Edward Chow (USA) is a Senior Fellow in the Energy and National Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and an international energy expert, specializing in oil and gas investments in emerging economies, with more than 30 years of oil industry experience.
  - 16 Mr. Gideon Tadmor (Israel) is the Chief Executive Officer of *Avner* and the Chairman of *Delek* Drilling.
  - 17 Prof. Brenda Shaffer is a specialist on energy and foreign policy, energy security policies, the Caucasus, Caspian energy and Eastern Mediterranean energy issues. She currently is a Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies (CERES).
  - 18 Prof. Eytan Sheshinski (Israel) is the Sir Isaac Wolfson Professor of Public Finance Emeritus at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
  - 19 Dr. Joseph "Yossi" Vardi (Israel) is an angel investor and hi-tech entrepreneur and Chairman of International Technologies.
  - 20 Ms. Michal Rinott (Israel) is an interaction designer with a background in cognitive psychology. She is a senior faculty member in the Holon Institute of Technology (HIT) and the founder of the HIT Interaction Lab, a unique interdisciplinary center of research and teaching around interaction design.
  - 21 Mr. Yoav Kleiner (Israel) is a passionate and accomplished maker. He made his career in the high-tech industry.
  - 22 Mr. Yariv Bash (Israel) is the CEO and Founder of SpaceIL, the Israeli team competing in the Google Lunar X-Prize, a privately funded, unmanned race to the moon with a \$30 million prize.
  - 23 Ms. Liat Segal (Israel) is a new media artist whose work fuses together art and technology.
  - 24 Mr. Eyal Gever (Israel) is a digital artist with 18 years of experience in 3D technologies.