

Lesley Sachs: Let Me Hear Thy Voice

Lesley Sachs is an artist and a social activist who served for a decade as the CEO of Women of the Wall. In her exhibition *Let Me Hear Thy Voice* she displays paintings focusing on the topics of gender and social justice.

In the gender realm Sachs addresses the changes in the military system as well as in the religious establishment, both of which are considered typically male. Two of the images depict this change in the army – one portraying exuberant female soldiers serving as tank instructors while wearing “male” overalls, and the second an infantry soldier returning to base, a machine gun on his lap while his hands are involved in the “female” hobby of knitting.

The change in the religious establishment is represented by images of “Women of the Wall” during the services they hold in the women’s section of the Western Wall. They are wearing Tallitot, Kippot and Teffilin, something the Ultra-Orthodox and National Orthodox streams oppose, since these are viewed as exclusively male paraphernalia. The paintings of the women are characterized by soft, eye-catching hues, reflecting unity and solidarity as well as alluding to the feminine ambiance created during their prayers, which stands in stark contrast to the male character depicted in the image of four soldiers reciting Shharit.

Sachs addresses the inequality in the Muslim society by portraying a seemingly innocent scene on the beach, where the Muslim women are sitting on plastic chairs in the water watching the other bathers. Their heavy and confining attire precludes them from the freedom of movement which the young woman (in the front of the painting) enjoys as she emerges from a swim in a revealing bathing suit.

The second series of paintings depicts social justice or, more correctly, the lack thereof. Here one can find gloomy images from the fringes of society, such as a man fishing bottles out of the rubbish to be cashed in while on the back of his T shirt is displayed the slogan of the Likud political party. Other paintings show torn old shoes with dirty feet sticking out, street-dwelling young boys sleeping on cardboard on the sidewalk, etc. The absence of human faces in this series represents the loss of identity of these downtrodden people.

Lesley Sachs currently lives in Tel Aviv although she grew up in Haifa after her parents immigrated from South Africa when she was 5 years old. She served in the army in a soldiers training facility, studied philosophy and literature at Haifa University and hotel management in Jerusalem. She has served as the PR director and spokesperson for the Israel Women’s Network and later as the CEO of the IWN, the CEO of the Israel Religious Action Center, vice president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, director of Beit Shmuel-Mercuz Shimshon in Jerusalem, and was the founding director of Project Keshet, an organization for the advancement of Russian speaking Jewish women in Israel.

Sachs began her social justice involvement during her studies at Haifa University and was an active volunteer in rape crisis centers, shelters for women and for Agunot who were refused divorce. She also serves as the deputy chairperson on board of the Israeli Reform movement.

She was introduced to painting 12 years ago and was trained in the studio of the artist Dalya Segev Furman and later studied with the artist Alexander Cherkov.

Dvora Goldberger, Exhibition Curator

Contact the artist
E-mail: Lesleysachs@gmail.com
Site: www.lesleysachs.art