

Israelis residing in Japan hold Tokyo art exhibit

By LIANE GRUNBERG
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For six Israeli artists living in Japan, 1988 has been a pretty good year. Independently, they've exhibited in Ginza galleries and prestigious department stores, taken first prize at the Sapporo International Snow Sculpture Competition, pursued art degrees on Monbusho scholarship and received invitations to show abroad.

On Sunday, Dec. 11, the Jewish Community of Japan (JCC), in joint cooperation with the Israeli Embassy, will present their first group show in Japan. More than 60 works — paintings, sculpture, paperworks, graphic design and pottery will be exhibited on the second floor of the JCC during an afternoon reception and sale from 2:30-5 p.m.

Spanning a geographic net that spreads from Tokyo to Nagoya and even a pottery town, many of the artists will be meeting for the first time at the exhibition.

Nimrod Besor, 32, is a student at Tokyo's leading modern art university, Tama University of Arts. After a brief stay in New York's Lower East Side, Besor arrived in Tokyo in 1987 to pursue a master of fine arts on a Monbusho (Ministry of Education) scholarship.

In February, he was part of the Israeli delegation sent to the International Snow Festival in Sapporo, where his circle of 12 ghostlike figures brought the team first prize. The sculptor, more recently,

has exhibited his anguished apparitions at the Setagaya Art Museum and in a solo show at Seibu department store in Shibuya.

Graphic designer, Adlai Stock, 28, is also here on a Monbusho scholarship. The artist, who grew up in both Israel and the United States, was an illustrator and designer for the "Maariv," a popular evening newspaper in Israel, before coming to Japan. In July, he married a former classmate at Aichi Prefectural University of Fine Art in Nagoya, where he is finishing up the second year of a master's degree.

Leaving behind a strong following in Israel, Avi Feiler arrived in Tokyo unknown in 1987. Feiler, 39, who paints in the painstaking, classic Renaissance manner, dreamed that in the best of all worlds, he could find a Japanese patron to free him to do his intensely detailed paintings.

Using brushes with microscopic hairs, his marvelous, lifelike portraits revive a tradition that harks back to Botticelli and da Vinci. It was during the year that Yasuda Fire and Marine Insurance purchased "Sunflowers" for \$39 million that Feiler fantasized, if only he could meet the man who bought that Van Gogh painting.

Not long after, Feiler was sitting in a coffee shop, and struck up a conversation in his usual affable way. Feiler's "salaryman" turned out to be one of the biggest importers of Western art to Japan, the



Butoh-inspired painting by Nourit Masson-Sekine.

PHOTO BY NOURIT MASSON-SEKINE

man who arranged the Van Gogh purchase.

Feiler invited the man back to his studio, where he fell in love with the Israeli's paintings, bought six works, and rapidly set about introducing Feiler to European collectors. Feiler's first publication of lithographs are to be sold soon at Seibu department stores.

Nourit Masson-Sekine, 32, is also no stranger to Ginza's gallery scene. A resident of Tokyo for seven years, the French-born Israeli has cultivated a deep love of Butoh and recently published a book on Japan's homegrown avant-garde dance form. She has exhibited drawings, paintings, satirical hand puppets, and most recently, was part of Tokyo Transmission, a

museum-without-walls exhibition at Seibu department store in Yurakucho.

For Lithuanian-born artist Liubov Shtein, 33, an Israeli emigre who has exhibited major lucite sculpture and abstract paintings in Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv and later New York, Bonn and Dusseldorf, this exhibition at the JCC will mark her Japan debut.

A Tokyo resident since 1985, Shtein's early works were inspired by Japan's richly patterned wrapping paper. Over the years, as her atelier doubled from one six-tatami room to two, Shtein's canvases have also undergone transformations. The sharp geometric designs have all but disappeared and, turning now to pastels and crayons, she draws sensual abstract patterns that veil faces and bodies from the unexpected viewing.

Finally, there is Avi Beracha, 31, who arrived in Tokyo in 1980 to study aikido. He later moved to Shizuoka to practice Zen and by 1985, married and became a father. In his words, "I had the good fortune to be introduced to a potter who worked in the Bizen style." Beracha is now at the end of his apprenticeship in Okayama and is looking forward to opening his own production-ware workshop.

The Sunday reception, free and open to the public, is made possible in part through Daiichi Shoko ware imports. For further information, call (03) 718-2279.