

# Two Israeli Artists, Two Worlds of Art

(Part 7 in a Series)

Many artists love to share not only their artistic vision in their artwork, but also their knowledge in the mediums they work with. Such are the two artists I met with this week. Both were teaching art throughout the years, part of their process of becoming better artists, by giving forward to others.

The first artist I interviewed this week is Haya Nativ. Haya moved from Israel to Toronto twenty years ago with her family. A teacher by profession, she developed and specialized into being an art teacher, and later on into a facilitator of art projects.

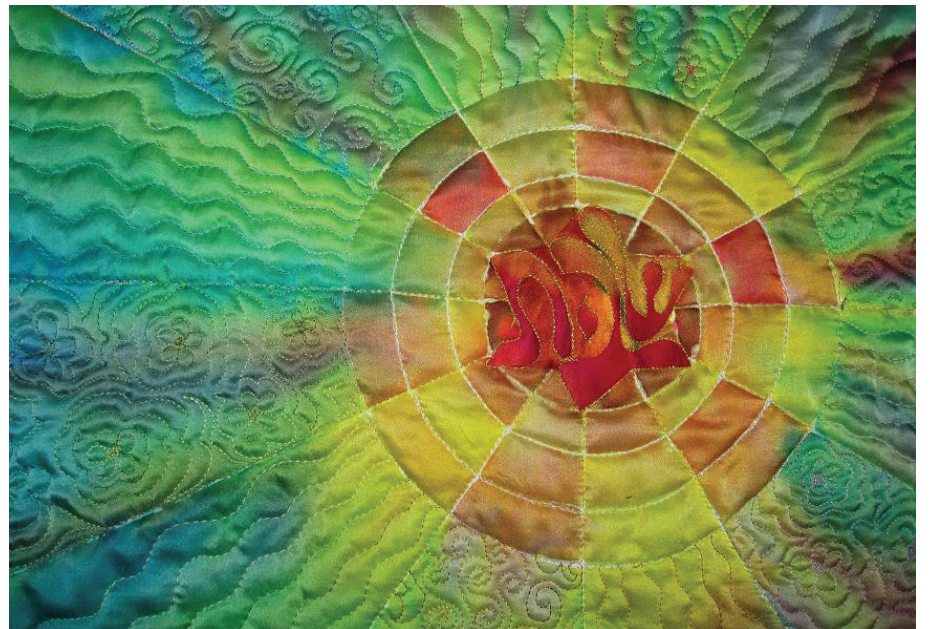
Haya worked in several media, such as painting, stained glass, jewelry, woodworking, papier-mâché and others, until she landed in the medium she is known for, the one she feels most comfortable with, the textile and fiber. The softness of the fabric, its flexibility, diversity as a two- or three-dimensional material, endless patterns and colours, woven or knitted, with different texture – all give Haya everything she is looking for in her artistic adventures. In addition to buying the fabrics, she also makes her own – weaving, pasting, dyeing and other techniques.

Haya's inspiration is mostly in Judaic themes, Israel and the Bible. When she arrived to Canada, she gave craft workshops, and was influenced by some of her religious students, who exposed her to the many symbols and Judaica items, which she started making – Challah covers, Matzah covers, Talit bags and such. Then she started getting commissions from synagogues: holy ark curtains, Torah covers, Chuppahs and wall hangings. As time went by, the style became more and more artistic and contemporary.

Haya is tightly connected with the Jewish and Israeli community in Toronto, from which many of her clients come. As an art project facilitator, Haya organized and led groups and organizations in creating together special items. Notable are the wall carpet commissioned by the JWF for the year of battered women support, which is hung at the Leah Posluns Theatre at the Prosserman JCC, the Chuppah commemorating the 100th year anniversary of Adat Israel synagogue, the High Priest Cloths project by the Pomegranate Guild of Judaic Textiles, Toronto (the Guild unites artisans who are interested in textile art and needlework based on Judaic themes), as well as many Chuppahs created by families and friends of the bride and groom, following Haya's designs and directions.

My second interview was with Alisa Levona, who is a painter. Alisa was born in Tel Aviv, and moved to Canada with her parents in her teen years. After graduating high school, she moved back to Israel by herself, to serve in the army, and later on, to complete her art studies at the Midrasha for Art Teachers. In 1990 she returned once again to Toronto, this time with her husband, which she met in Israel.

Throughout the years, Alisa taught art at some of the Jewish schools, such as USDS and Heschel. She also worked a few years with her husband in his commercial pho-



Left: Haya Nativ with details from the High Priest Cloths by the Pomegranate Guild of Judaic Textiles, Toronto . Right: Haya Nativ, Challah cover



Alisa Levona, Untitled, Two panels mixed Media on canvas, 70" x 40"

tography studio. Throughout the years Alisa was commissioned to paint many portraits and other paintings, but at the same time she also developed her own style, exploring the balance between real and imagined, representational art and abstract art, old and new, classic and contemporary.

Her exposure to different media – traditional oils and modern photography editing, her teaching experience with different age groups, her love for the old masters like Caravaggio and Rembrandt, as well as 20th century artists such as Rothko, Jim Dine, David Salle, Francesco Clement, Rauschenberg and Israeli artist Uri Lifshitz – all influenced her work. In her Homage to Leonardo series, Alisa used a mixed media to explore this lifelong fascination in several ways: The juxtaposition of collage images of De Vinci's madonnas with abstract background. The usage of many media within the piece, including materials such as putty and shellac, usually found in home construction sites rather than in the artist's studio. The confined geometric shapes, which the colours fill and at the same time, break-out-of, in an organized, yet chaotic manner. All of these oppositions

and contradictions come together to find a fine balance, one Alisa is seeking throughout her body of work.

Haya's art can be viewed at <http://allinonepicture.com> as well as at her studio. If you are interested in commissioning artwork, or to meet Haya, please call 416 633 2664 or send an email to [hayanativ@rogers.com](mailto:hayanativ@rogers.com)

Alisa's paintings can be viewed at <http://alisalevona.com>. If you are interested in commissioning artwork, or to meet Alisa, please call 416 398 0751 or send an email to [art@alisalevona.com](mailto:art@alisalevona.com)

Both Haya and Alisa will be participating in the Israeli Artists Group show in May 13-16 at the MacDonald House, 121 Centre Street, Thornhill. Come to meet them and the rest of the group's artists at the show opening night, Thursday, May 13th, between 6 to 9pm. For more information please visit [www.IsraeliArtistsGroup.com](http://www.IsraeliArtistsGroup.com)

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Alisa Levona, Untitled, Mixed Media on canvas, 24" x 30"