

Tunes and Tones Pulse In Meir Appelfeld's Art

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"View from Cabri" monoprint 45 X 41.5 cm by Meir Appelfeld (image courtesy of Artspace Gallery)

Culture vultures may be forgiven for thinking Tel Aviv is the sole destination for the arts in Israel. Dwarfed by her bigger sister at the end of Highway One, there is, nonetheless, a vibrant arts community in the capital city. I tend to think of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as siblings, one a little flashier and extroverted; the other a little harder to get to know and introverted, but worth the effort to discover her less obvious charms.

Art lovers in both locales now gain by overlapping exhibitions of Meir Appelfeld's works. The [Artspace Gallery](#) in Jerusalem's German Quarter is exhibiting monoprints created by Appelfeld at Kibbutz Cabri and the [Rothschild Fine Art Gallery](#) in Tel Aviv is showing oil paintings of landscape and still life.

It is only a few steps off Jerusalem's bustling Emek Refaim Street to the Artspace Gallery, where nothing would indicate that the street's name means The Valley of the Ghosts. A lively mélange of boutiques and eateries of every sort, it attracts an eclectic mix of locals and visitors. Those in the know take the short turn to poet

Linda Zisquit's gallery where her sunny, high-ceilinged home shares space with works by her roster of artists.

The monoprints now on exhibit were created at the Gottesman Etching Center at [Cabri](#), a center for high quality printmaking in the Western Galilee. Typically, a monoprint is created by applying ink with brushes or other application tools, such as cotton swabs, brayers, sponges, fingers, needles and so on, to create a surface that a sheet of paper will be pressed against and pulled away to create the final image. It is a printing technique which, perhaps, is the most painterly of printing methods; it combines the spontaneity of direct application of the wet ink with the element of the unknown that comes from the pull of the pressed sheet. As with most prints, a mirror reversal of the original image appears as the final result. Though the same plate may be used a second time to get a weaker "ghost" image, this method creates one-of-a-kind works, unlike other printing methods that may be printed in multiple sets.



"View from Cabri" monoprint 99 X 32.5 cm by Meir Appelfeld (image courtesy of Artspace Gallery)

Born in 1967 and raised in Jerusalem, Appelfeld showed early talents both in art and music. A violinist, he had, at one point, considered a musical career and decided instead to devote himself to art studies. He studied at the Byam Shaw School of Art, and continued on to receive an MFA from the Royal Academy of Arts School, both in London. If the name rings a bell, it may be because he is the son of well-known Israeli author [Aharon Appelfeld](#), who faithfully joins the admirers at his son's openings.

Appelfeld's strong suit is tonality and these subtle prints show his skill off to great advantage. Ranging from high contrast black and white through delicate grays, his interpretations of the Cabri landscape emphasize the strong verticals and rhythmic horizontals of nature. Some are a mere suggestion of the subject, with

simplified results approaching abstraction.



“Still Life with Two Violins and Cupid” oil on canvas 71 X 86 cm by Meir Appelfeld (image courtesy of RFA Gallery)

Situated at the end of a wide tree-lined boulevard, the Rothschild Gallery exhibition also evidences a musical sense, where Appelfeld presents a new series dealing with musical instruments as still life. These works involve large color masses dividing the canvas in table-top arrangements set against velvety blacks – a signature element in his work. The black helps maximize the brightness of the few colors of his limited palette – and combines with a lively surface. The paintings are comprised of layers, starting with a veil of under-painting of strong color. then a layer ranging from thinly applied paint to more thickly applied opaque paint, and then peppered with markings scraped through to the color below made by the brush end or palette knife tip. These ticks and nervous little squiggles help us peek below the surface. Whether these markings are a purposeful part of his measurement process, as in the late [Euan Uglow](#)'s work, or a musician's improvised search for staccato effect to enliven the surface is unclear, but, together with linear strokes, they underscore a feel for pattern and rhythm.

In another of the music series, Appelfeld seems to be engaging in a

conversation across time. French artist, [Paul Cezanne](#), used a Baroque plaster statuette of [Cupid](#) in a number of his still lifes as a way to connect with his artistic [antecedents](#). Visitors to Cezanne's last studio in Aix en Provence can still see the same [statue](#) and other still life elements used in his work. In "[Still Life with Cupid, French Horn and Flute](#)," and other works, as above, Appelfeld, seems to be nodding to Cezanne through the placement of a Cupid statue in his own work.



"Grove" oil on canvas 46 X 33 cm by Meir Apperfeld (image courtesy of RFA Gallery)

Pulsations are felt in the landscapes done in Jerusalem's "Moon Grove" park near his home, as well as in other still lifes. One of the few surviving urban nature spots not yet fallen prey to the grasp of developers, it is a beloved site for *plein air* painters, scout groups, dog walkers and nature lovers. Appelfeld's landscapes combine a calligraphic line, love of rhythm, a fuller color palette and a surface enriched by the various dashes that are an integral part of his repertoire. In other still lifes, the pattern of the repeated shapes of muted green and golden apples appear to be bending and nodding as silent dancers across the canvas.



"Apples" oil on canvas 47 X 52 cm by Meir Appelfeld (image courtesy of RFA Gallery)

It is not exactitude that Appelfeld seeks from whatever motif he chooses. He combines observation and memory to distill his summation of his subjects. It is as if, after years of practice and training, some of his works seem to be caught in a spotlight, gleaming after a good performance and taking a bow.