

Feature

Israeli artists invigorate Frame of Mind Gallery

By MIRIAM CHINSKY

TORONTO — Calman Shemi's paintings at Frame of Mind Gallery on the west side of Avenue Road south of Wilson sing with colour.

David Schluss, also at Frame of Mind, has created a distinctive personal style. Ignoring brush and spatula, he paints entirely with his hands.

"Using the palm of my hand I can get a play of light that I could never achieve with a brush," he says. "I start with the abstract and figures emerge."

A sculptor as well, he currently fashions bronze figures, whirling, dancing, embracing — virtually pulsing with life — which evolve from his extraordinary painting technique.

Gallery owner Ezra Ballas, originally from Ramat Gan, Israel, notes proudly that artists with strong ties to Israel comprise some 30 per cent of his comprehensive inventory. Shemi and Schluss attract an enthusiastic following.

Shemi, born in 1939 in Argentina, immigrated to Israel in 1961 and was a member of Kibbutz Carmia for 20 years, working in agriculture and sculpting in wood and clay. Over

time he explored soft painting, developed serigraphs and created with acrylics. A recent departure sees him "re-inventing" a lacquer technique reminiscent of ancient China and Japan. He paints on a wood or lacquer panel

that has been covered in layers of gold and/or silver leaf. Between each layer, the surface is hand-polished to a fine finish revealing a remarkable lustre. The artist enhances each work by building a shadow box for depth — his Wood and Windows approach. Just this year, he has added new beauty by hand-carving and lacquering frames attuned to each painting.

Shemi's solo exhibitions have appeared in several countries, including Israel, France, Australia, Canada, the United States, Spain and Nigeria. He also shows at the Spertus Museum of Judaica, the Fashion Institute in Chicago and Citibank New York.

David Schluss, born 1945 in Israel, attended school in Jaffa and was deeply affected by its mystic walls and its historic places of worship. Lacking funds for adequate painting materials, he sketched in charcoal

and cheap pencil, giving these studies to anyone who cared.

In his early 20s, Schluss migrated with his family to Montreal and in 1969, enrolled in the prestigious École des

Beaux Arts, began teaching privately and went on to complete a fine arts degree at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University).

Experimenting through the years, he arrived at his hands-on whimsy and joy method.

In 1983, Schluss opened a studio in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., but he travels frequently to Tel Aviv. His paintings are on view at Israel's Teffen Museum, at Fort Lauderdale's Museum of Modern Art and in private and public collections throughout the world.

At his Frame of Mind Gallery, Ezra Ballas knows what paintings, prints and sculptures appeal, selecting quality works and offering a bright oasis in the neigh-

bourhood location, 2074½ Avenue Rd. where he has been situated for 22 years.

For information about the gallery, phone 416-485-5731.



David's Harp, bronze sculpture "pulsating with life."



Embrace. "Starting with the abstract."