

A New Art Form: Kabbalistic Israeli Artist David Baruch Wolk

Every once in a while there is an artist born whose work blazes a path beyond the ordinary, beyond the expected, to a new frontier that promises to take us beyond our expectations to our aspirations. David Baruch Wolk is such an artist.

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1959, Wolk received his professional training at Amherst College graduating Magna Cum Laude in Fine Arts in 1981. He went on to garner an impressive list of advanced education credentials from the Caumsett School for Landscape Painting at Queen's College, Boston University Museum School, the New York Studio School, Yale University and Oregon University.

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But what is it that he does? What is it about his art that should make us all grasp -- we are in a generation that is developing a new art form?

Wolk has perfected an art form that blends the delicate boundary of abstraction to the apparent concrete vision of words from ancient mystical texts. In layman terms his canvases combine the richness of the written word with the abstract. Hebrew text, color, flowing lines and a visual invitation into the inner world of the artist all meld together into an integrated whole that challenges the viewer each time the artwork is viewed. Each work is an invitation to find the many layers of meaning. This new genre has been termed by Nurit Sirkis Bank, the Curator of the Jerusalem Wolfson Museum of Jewish Art as "Conceptual Abstraction".

Imminently Qualified

Wolk is imminently qualified to integrate abstract and concrete. In 1986, at the age of 26, he left behind the secular world, moved to Israel and became Torah observant.

Leaving behind his art, he trained as a sofer stam (scribe)

specializing in very high quality tefillin (phylacteries) parchments, mezuzahs and Torah scrolls. It was only after 20 years had elapsed that he returned to painting.

A pivotal reason for his return was his growth from years of Torah study. Wolk now sees that the essence of creativity, which he had strived to find as a young man but could not, was to be found in the building blocks of creation itself, Hebrew letters.

But Wolk's work goes beyond the mere obvious inclusion of text with color. The integration of Jewish kabbalistic sources such as the sephirot take the viewer through a doorway into prisms of integrated color, text, and hidden meaning. Every ounce of Wolk's formidable artistic training and Torah studies is poured into each artwork to create a masterpiece of expression.

Wolk's artwork encompasses oil and drawings. The latter, done with such ordinary instruments as colored pencils burst with the intricacy and interplay of light, colour and patterns.

It might be said that art that brings meaning is, for many, the most valuable of acquisitions. An art form that has married abstraction



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The 22 Letters and How They Are Situated Within the Sephirot



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Original Drawing



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*The Creator of Man and his Director
Made him and Established him
Prepared to Understand and to Cognate
With Great Intellect, More than the
Ministering Angels (The Way to the Tree
of Life by Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto)*