

AIDA 2.0

AIDA's mission is to foster the development of contemporary decorative artists from Israel by connecting them to an international audience of galleries, institutions and collectors.

BY DOUG ANDERSON
AIDA CO-FOUNDER

When Mark Lyman, SOFA's founder, asked that I write this essay for SOFAchicago's 20th Anniversary Catalog, I looked at AIDA's web site (www.aidaarts.org) and saw that we had written about AIDA six of the seven times we showed at SOFA. Without SOFA, AIDA would never have happened. Mark gave us the chance to walk and now we're running.

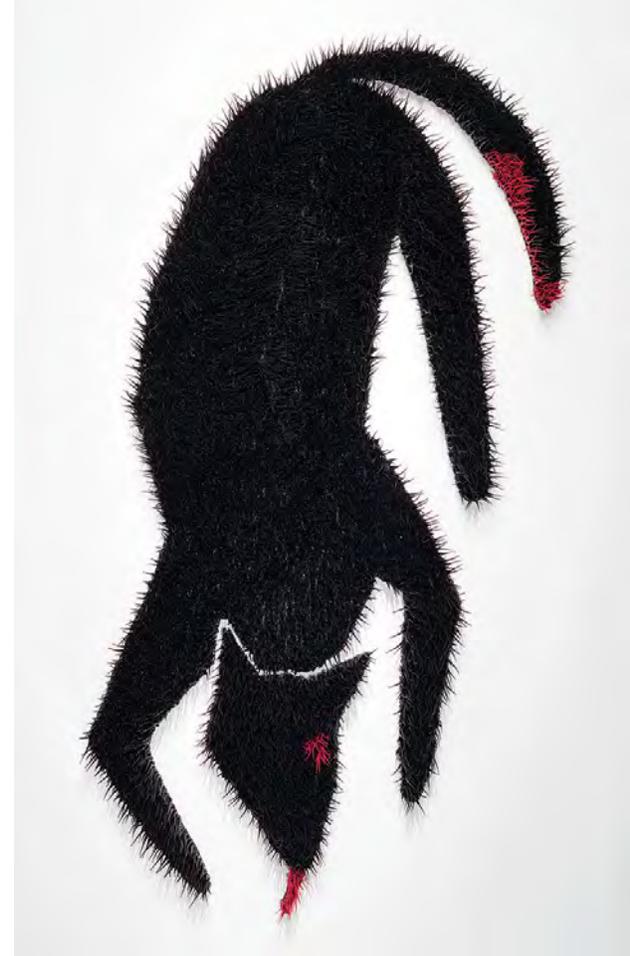
One of the artists my wife Dale and I met on our first trip to Israel was Dafna Kaffeman. She was at the Eretz Israel Museum showing Henrietta Bruner, the Museum's Curator of Glass, something she had made and we loved it. Indeed, Dale offered to buy it on the spot but the Museum got first choice and we wound up commissioning Dafna to make a different piece. It has lived in the same place, under our staircase, for a decade (quite unusual for Dale). In addition to simply being a terrific work of art, it serves as a daily reminder of how AIDA began.

But how do you measure success?

I guess one of the metrics would be to look at who owns the work 10 years later. In Dafna's case, I asked if her work was in any public collections and she sent me this list:

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts - Montreal, Canada; Corning Museum of Glass - Corning, NY, USA; Museum of American Glass - Milville, NJ, USA; Racine Art Museum - Racine, WI, USA; Glas-Museum Alter Hof Herding - Ernsting Stiftung, Coesfeld-Lette, Germany; Victoria & Albert Museum - London, England; Coburg Museum - Coburg, Germany; Alexander Tutsek-Stiftung, Germany

Now that's impressive. But there's more. Dafna balances her career as an artist with her family and her job as Head of the Glass Department at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, where she



Evoking the Grotesque (Wolves series), Dafna Kaffeman (Israeli, b. 1972). Israel, Jerusalem, 2005. Flame-worked glass. 135 x 72 x 6 cm, Collection of The Corning Museum of Glass (2006.3.1, gift of Dale & Doug Anderson)

has helped to develop a community of artists working in glass in Israel.

And so, if showing the work of mature artists from Israel at SOFAchicago was the start of AIDA, what about AIDA 2.0? Our jury—Jane Adlin (Associate Curator, Department of Modern and Contemporary Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art), Dale Anderson (Contemporary Art Collector) and Davira Taragin (Consultative Curator, David Owsley Museum of Art, Ball State University)—went to Israel in June 2013 to find out.

When we brought artists from Israel to SOFA and then to COLLECT, the Philadelphia

Craft Show and Craft Boston, it was interesting to watch how they handled themselves with collectors. Most had not had face-to-face experience with collectors but were fast learners and, along with the confidence they quickly developed, they digested comments about their work and the subtleties of the marketplace. Cameras clicked and clicked and clicked... Israel is a small country and, to some extent, insular. Exposing these artists, many of whom are teachers, to the full array of the world's contemporary decorative arts was an unexpected bonus and it was then that we realized that part of the way we needed to look at our programs was to give the unexpected a chance to happen.

And so, we began to bring artists from the United States to Israel to teach workshops and to expand our scholarship program.

One of our programs is a partnership with the Watershed Ceramics Center. Nicknamed "AIDAshed", three ceramists are chosen to go to Israel and work on a kibbutz with the ceramics community for two weeks. The relationships that have been made are so intense that artist Christa Assad occasionally gives a talk about it and artist Nan Smith has just published an essay about AIDAshed in a ceramics magazine.

Since the program was such a success, one of our Board Members suggested that we create partnerships with schools in the United States and bring the Directors of the Studio of the Corning Museum of Glass, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Penland School of Crafts and Pilchuck Glass School to Israel to meet everyone and

Scholarship recipients Dana Landau, Olga Razin, Orit Marili attended Pilchuck Glass School as "Poleturners". Pictured with Randy Walker who led the 2013 project. The Poleturners work as a team to make centerpieces each year for sale at the Pilchuck Auction.



explain their programs...and so we did. It soon became clear that we should bring the department heads from Israel's art schools to visit their new friends in the United States...and so we did.

The result is a full-blown scholarship program serving more than 20 artists each year. Our partnership with Haystack is for students who are chosen by the department heads at Israeli schools Bezalel, Shenkar and Tel Hai. The department heads in Israel award scholarships and Haystack gets the best students. The programs at Corning, Penland and Pilchuck are for committed, practicing artists and teachers.

And so it came to pass that AIDA's director, Aviva Ben-Sira, brought Dale, Davira and Jane to "Boris and Mayanne's Studio" in Tel Aviv — a studio that didn't exist a decade ago — for a visit with the "glass community"...a community that didn't exist a decade ago. Twenty-nine artists sat in a circle talking with two knowledgeable curators and an art collector about their work and their future. It was amazing. Each of the artists had spent time at Corning and/or at Pilchuck. With these programs, AIDA has had a significant impact on the use of glass as an artmaking material in Israel.

So how do you measure success?

Three years ago, we realized it would be a good idea to expand the number of museum curators who were familiar with Israel's contemporary decorative arts and design scene. We developed a program for museum curators with "our cousins" at *Artis* who had been running trips for curators of contemporary art for a few years. Emily Zilber



(Ronald C. and Anita L. Wornick Curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) was our first curator and Aviva supplemented the *Artis* trip with a few days focused on decorative arts and design. It was a complete success. Not only did Emily get to see the full sweep of Israel's art world, she "infected" the other curators with an interest in the decorative arts. Cindi Strauss of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Matilda McQuaid of the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum visited Israel next. This year, we will be bringing Ulysses Dietz of the Newark Museum and Diane Charbonneau of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Curators are the ultimate collectors and there's no telling what they will acquire for their permanent collections...and there's no telling what they will see that will spark a thought that will lead to an exhibition. Clearly, there is nobody better to teach than teachers and there's nobody better to bring to an artist's studio for a visit than a museum curator. We keep adding to our list of curators we would like to bring to Israel (now 17) and we are open to your suggestions.

So how do you measure success?

For the last few years, jewelers from Israel have been juried into museum shows to sell their work, including "LOOT" in New York at the Museum of Arts & Design and "BIJOUX" in Palm Beach at the Norton Museum. Aviva, Dale and Davira have worked to help choose the applicants and AIDA has supported travel costs to help level the playing field.

Sales may not always be the measure of success, though sales are important. One of the jewelers who sold little in Palm Beach was picked up by a dealer and signed a representation agreement...her work is extremely intellectual and perfect for the gallery.

We've been asked "who are AIDA's stars" and how do you measure their success?

This is a hard question. Aleksandra Stoyanov might be considered a star because she is represented by BrownGrotta Arts and one of her large weavings was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ayala Serfaty might be a star because her furniture and lighting designs are represented by important dealers in New York and Paris and her works have been acquired by the



Mint Museum, the MFA Houston, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the MFA Boston and the Museum of Arts and Design. The winners of the "Andy Prize" (www.theandy.org.il/en/) might be considered stars because they are chosen each year by an international jury and have had solo shows at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art as well as a work acquired for the Israel Museum's permanent collection.

I prefer to think that the 135 artists we've touched are all stars...each at a different stage in his/her career. □

Joy of Transition (SOMA series), Ayala Serfaty, 2012. Glass rods and polymer membrane 180 x 120 x 60 cm. Collection of Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC. Photo by Albi Serfaty

We communicate best by e-mail and if you would like to be added to our list, send an e-mail to info@aidaarts.org. Not only will you be kept up to date on what AIDA is doing, you'll get some oddball information and some "freebies". Additionally, you might check our website (www.aidaarts.org) or our Facebook page.



From the First Person-Number II, Aleksandra Stoyanov (Ukrainian, born Odessa 1957), 1997-98. Wool, rayon, synthetic fiber 76 1/2 x 78 1/2 in. (194.3 x 199.4 cm). Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Doron and Marianne Livnat, 2012 2012.307

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING...

SINCE 2005, AIDA HAS BEEN GIVING SCHOLARSHIPS TO ARTISTS and helping to place teachers from Israel at the great Summer Studio Craft Programs in the United States. Here's what they are saying....

"We are very happy to have our students heading out again this year, supported by AIDA scholarships, to programs in partnering schools in North America. In fact, building the relationships between schools in Israel and prestigious, leading institutions in North America serves the overall development of the field; it is a wonderful platform for collaboration between directors and faculty, but even more, a life-changing opportunity for personal and artistic growth for our individual students who participate in these programs, such as those in Haystack and Penland. AIDA's role in facilitating this dialogue is crucial and we are grateful for the leadership you have taken in this realm."

— Asher Arnon, Managing Director of Tel-Hai Arts Institute

"A few days ago I got back home from Pilchuck's Poleturners 2013. It was a fantastic and great experience for me working with a group of very talented people, excellent facilities and gorgeous nature around."

— Olga Rozin, Israeli glass artist

"This past July I was sent as an AIDA scholar to one of the most enchanting places I have ever been to and definitely the most interesting institution, Penland School of Crafts, North Carolina. As I have written you in the past, the chance to meet designers and makers from around the world has contributed a great deal to my design work. As a result of my visit I have been invited to teach a workshop of my own this coming July. The invitation alone of an Israeli lecturer to teach in an establishment so highly regarded as Penland School of crafts is proof of the importance of AIDA's lobby for Israeli designers."

— Amir Friedman, Israeli jewelry designer

"Thank you for the incredible personal and professional experience resulting from my trip to Israel. The weeklong visit brought me and my colleague Jean McLaughlin, Executive Director of Penland School of Craft, into contact with key individuals, institutions and communities in the arts while educating us on important aspects of Israeli culture, geography and history."

— Jim Baker, Director of Pilchuck Glass School

"Many thanks to AIDA; I feel extremely lucky to have been chosen. I also feel like my experience at Penland is really taking my work in a forward direction. Beyond this direct impact of the course, just being here (in one of the most beautiful places that I have ever seen) and listening to great art masters, watching them work, and being a part of a creative community that embraces arts and crafts has been an incredibly inspiring experience."

— Dana Ben Shalom, Israeli fiber artist

"AIDA's support of a fellowship to Haystack and now a stipend to Pilchuck is very significant and we are grateful to be able to send our students to participate in such sought after programs. The important opportunities that AIDA provides for students and faculty alike, expand their experiences and perspective whilst enhancing their art work and skills. On behalf of the Academy, I would like to thank you for your constant involvement and support. We truly appreciate all of AIDA's hard work and efforts in creating an impressive association for the arts in Israel and are grateful for our friendship that has developed throughout the years."

— Liv Sperber, Director of International Relations and Resource Development, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

"I wanted to follow up after returning home from Israel. It was such a great trip from beginning to end. Our group was particularly special I think. The generosity and warmth between all of us had many in tears at the end."

— Molly Hatch, Israeli ceramicist AIDAshed participant

"Thank you again for sending me on this once-in-a-lifetime experience. I benefitted tremendously from it both professionally and personally. And I certainly can now count myself as an enlightened fan of Israeli decorative arts and design! It was intense, exhilarating, emotional, revelatory, and intellectually stimulating all at once. I came home exhausted but in the best possible way - that deep exhaustion one gets from a truly meaningful experience."

— Cindi Strauss, Curator, Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston