ARTIS

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

ARTIS, FOUNDED IN 2004, IS AN INDEPENDENT NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION BASED IN NEW YORK AIMING TO CREATE A VAST OFFSITE NETWORK ACCESSIBLE TO ISRAELI ARTISTS TO PENETRATE THE GLOBAL ART CIRCUIT. ITS COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMES INSPIRE REFLECTION AND DEBATE ON OUR SHARED ARTISTIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE. ITS CONCEPTION AND SUCCESS SEE A SHIFT IN THE QUINTESSENTIAL RECOGNISED MAJOR ART CENTRES TO HIGHLIGHT THE TALENT AND PRODUCTION IN THE 'PERIPHERY'.

Not only is the public visibility advantageous to the artists, but the exposure to Artis' prized jury members is an even more desirable opportunity.

As a strategy to localise sales, in 2004, Sotheby's Israeli Art auctions was moved from Tel Aviv to New York. Rivka Saker, an avid philanthropist, collector and the person responsible for opening up the Sotheby's office in Israel, recognising the swift advancement in the art scene on a global scale, estimates the possibility of Israel and its artistic production to be left behind. Like a boat sailing against the current, instead of being swept away by torrential waves, the Artis initiative was born, independent to the activities at Sotheby's, as a week-worth of events promoting Israeli Art as well as a magazine distributed to Sotheby's 17,000 collectors. The results concluded with an impressive success as an unmissable happening during the Armory Show that March.

As the non-profit organisation sets camps in New York, the activities provided by Artis later branched out into a multitude of engagements within Israel, in New York and in Los Angeles. From doing grant-making exhibitions outside of Israel, hosting specific career development workshops in collaboration with the Israel-based organisation Artport and the New York-based non-profit Asylum Arts to curating a special section on the Artis webpage with artists' video profiles, the organisation supports all of its artist-oriented activities through participating in art fairs, making art sales with limited editions on its online store, hosting trips for collectors, and raising funds through its board and other foundations.

Now with an annual budget of approximately US $700,000 to $1 million, they are grateful for the generous donation made by an anonymous donor three years ago. With that particular funds, Artis created its Project Grants programme for Israeli artists to develop their work in the amount up to US $10,000. The selection process takes into consideration the proposal presentation, the feasibility of the budget and the timeline, and more notably, the jury at Artis, which are composed of alumni from Artis' signature research trips who are experts and professionals in the international art world and look for unique characters and tenacity in the artist-applicants. "The artists need to have their artwork established to some degree in the art world in Israel or beyond," says Yael Reinharz, Executive Director of Artis. "We are looking for artists who can compete and succeed internationally. We are looking for a balance in diversity in terms of gender, religion, practice, and so on. We are looking for artists who are in dialogue with the international art discourse, whose practice is *au courant*."

PREVIOUS SPREAD
Tamar Ettun and The Moving Company, Mauve Bird with Yellow Teeth Red Feathers Green Feet and a Rose Belly: Part YELLOW, performance at Uppsala Art Museum, Sweden, 2016. (2016 Exhibition Grantee). Courtesy of Artis.

Maya Zack, Counterlight, video still, 24 minutes, 2016. (2015 Project Grantee). Courtesy of Artis.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Einat Amir, Enough About You, performance at Maxxi Museum of Rome, 2016. (2016 Exhibition Grantee). Courtesy of Artis.

Hilla Ben Ari, Rethinking Broken Lines, video installation at the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, 2017 (2016 Artis Project Grantee). Courtesy of Artis.

Yael Reinharz, Executive Director of Artis.

Reinharz affirms that Artis facilitates debates and conversations to develop a mutual interest in contemporary art within Israel and beyond.

Hill Ben Ari, a multidisciplinary artist based in Tel Aviv, is one of the Artis' 2016 Project Grantees. Her awarded project *Rethinking Broken Lines*, which was exhibited at the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, is a large-scale video installation looking at the duality of endurance and ephemerality of the human body through a dialogue with the oeuvre of the celebrated Israeli choreographer Heda Oren. The project as well as the exhibition have captured much media attention, one of the top benefits from getting the Artis stamp of approval and endorsement. In addition to that, these activities and awardees are included in the Artis newsletters, which has over 10,000 subscribers. Not only is the public visibility advantageous to the artists, but the exposure to Artis' prized jury members is an even more desirable opportunity.

The Artis Research Trips to Israel has been running for the past decade. The alumni of these programmes are boasted experts in the art world. "The goal of the research trips is to look at the people who have some kind of influence within the art world, some kind of ability to create projects, writings, to galvanise opportunities for artists." Reinharz affirms that Artis facilitates debates and conversations to develop a mutual interest in contemporary art within Israel and beyond. "It is about learning and we are happy with that as a basic level." While there is no obligation to produce any kind of collaborations or work with individuals or institutions after the trips, many participants, due to their genuine interest and their openness to experience, have decided to stay behind in Israel. "It is a long-term game and it is all about relationship. That is why having a base in New York or doing activities in Los Angeles is really important."

Reinharz remembers many testimonies after following Artis to Israel where people come out with more questions than answers. "In many cases, there are a lot of contradictions, which can in some ways be boiled down to the difference between making individual relationships and connections and looking at a larger political situation. Often, these things do not match." These are the intrigue and originality one cannot find in the established metropolitans of the art world. The thirteen-year-long presence of Artis is, of course, encouraging as, globally, we start to look at the offerings in countries we used to call 'peripheries' like Israel. Yet, according to Reinharz, "the landscape in Israel is that there are not many sources for funding. I think it is still a challenging pursuit being an artist working outside of a major art centre." It seems there is still much more to be discovered in Israel's mine of jewelled contemporary art. P.L.