

A Labyrinth into Personal Archaeology

A walk through the studio of Weisman in Tel Aviv in early September 2012, and its transition 'overseas' into the gallery space in Miami, ignites several directions of thought and reflection on the artist's current work.

Weisman's interdisciplinary installation invites the viewer into a space that holds two realms of experience at once: a labyrinth and an archaeological site. We as spectators, or visitors to this space eloquently must move around the space, as we undergo a process of excavation, deciphering the iconic symbols around us: a house, a head, a body, a ladder, numbers. Weisman entails in his work a process of digging and exposure, of a personal and cultural terrain, reminiscent of desert landscapes where removal and filling take place.

Inside this space, we are taken into a labyrinth which we must decipher, as it is inside labyrinths where a clear route that takes the visitor into the center where the 'truth' is said to be found. These labyrinths appear at times in dreams and may represent notions of misgivings or uncertainties. Usually it is difficult to find the access point into the labyrinth and difficult to escape it, legends say it is only the sage one that can find his/her way. The labyrinth may incite confusion or a sense of disorientation – represented in Weisman's center piece and ladders around the gallery – one can approach but cannot walk inside or through them, as they are minutely small, narrow or misgiving to a promenade within them.

Weisman is closely connected to his home-town Haifa, a port-city, industrial in character where the working class was a prominent layer of the population, where the ocean is always at the view of the spectator, yet at its skyline is filled with a view of large ships, transportation hauls, and a growing number of business office buildings. Reminiscent of the urban and natural landscapes of his hometown, Weisman in his special experiences juxtaposes painting, sculpture and installation, embedded as one body of work, interconnected to each other. This core element of his oeuvre embodies layers of reflection and perspective characteristic of the Weisman signature language that he has developed over the past decade.

Colin Renfrew, the prominent British archaeologist, claims that the archaeologist, much like a visitor at a gallery of contemporary art, attempts to make sense of and to figure out the material world in front of them, be it an art installation, or the objects, the artifacts and buildings unearthed from an archaeological excavation. But he also alludes to another kind of relationship: the archaeological process, according to the author, can be seen as art production, through the features created on the ground by exposing old structures and creating new ones, but also through material practices, such as photographing archaeological features, objects, and landscapes and producing texts about them.

All in caves, enclosed, usually lacking openings for escape, it is only through harsh digging that we as spectator can enter Weisman's world and find a head, a house, numbers. In the practice of preservation and conservation of archaeology each artifact or specimen is numbered with a small ticket, usually hidden from the viewer's eye. Here it seems as the numbers the artist has accumulated, perhaps each symbolizing an archival/archaeological specimen of his own, is buried deep inside the earth provoking also thoughts on death and mass burials, yet at the same time igniting a sense of terranial life.

Danna Heller

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Danna Heller is an independent art curator based in Tel Aviv.

Colin Renfrew was Master of Jesus College Cambridge, and later as director of the MacDonald Institute of Archaeological Research.