

THE CARE BEHIND THE FAIR



Sergey Bunkov's 'Untitled #4,' 31.5 by 23.75 by 3 inches, 2006; sand-carved painting on glass front and back; from Thomas R. Riley Galleries.

Right: Michal Zehavi's 'Untitled Jar Form,' 2006; kiln-fired white clay 20.5 by 16 by 14 inches; \$4,200, from Duane Reed Gallery.



Far right: Fran Kaufman, the new director of International Fine Art Expositions' palmbeach³ fair.



Daily News Photo by Jeffrey Langlois

Israeli decorative art coming to palmbeach³ has PB ties

By JAN SJOSTROM
Daily News Arts Editor

The Association of Israel's Decorative Arts exists to change the lives of Israeli artists.

The organization's efforts on behalf of Israeli decorative artists include arranging for their representation by galleries in the United States and Europe; exhibiting their work at international art fairs; securing scholarships, resi-

dencies and summer teaching positions for them at prominent American crafts schools; assisting in organizing museum exhibitions; and paying their travel expenses.

In the four years since its founding, AIDA has helped 40 Israeli artists, with no regard to their religious affiliation, while supporting itself on a shoestring budget and the dedication of a small group of

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volunteers.

Three galleries exhibiting the work of four AIDA artists will participate in the palmbeach³ art fair, which will open with an invitation-only preview Thursday and run through Jan. 15 at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach.

AIDA was born during

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New director: 'I had to learn a lot quickly'

By JAN SJOSTROM
Daily News Arts Editor

The heat is on for Fran Kaufman, the new director of palmbeach³.

Workers began setting up the fair at midnight Wednesday at the Palm Beach County Convention Center in West Palm Beach. The event will open Thursday with a private preview benefiting the School of the Arts Foundation and will run through Jan. 15.

Eighty-eight dealers in contempo-

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AIDA

Number of artists, volunteers grows

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two Palm Beach couples' vacation in Israel. Doug and Dale Anderson had never been to the country when they agreed to accompany their friends Andrea and Charles Bronfman on a trip in December 2001.

The Andersons did the usual sightseeing but, as longtime decorative arts collectors, they weren't content with that. They asked their guide to show them some art. "We were blown away,"

Doug Anderson said.

It was obvious that the art scene wasn't prospering. Even in the best of times, Israel's nearly 7 million residents cannot support much of an art industry. But in December 2001, the country was gripped by violence; tourism had plummeted, and the economy was in the doldrums.

The Andersons and Bronfmans decided something had to be done to connect struggling Israeli artists with the huge North American art market.

The Andersons contacted friend Mark Lyman, organizer of the Sculpture Objects & Functional Art fairs, to arrange for a complimentary booth at the 2003 SOFA Chicago exposition. They exhibited 10 artists' work at the fair.

"We thought this would be a one-time thing," Anderson said. "What shocked us was how positive the response was. We had phenomenal sales."

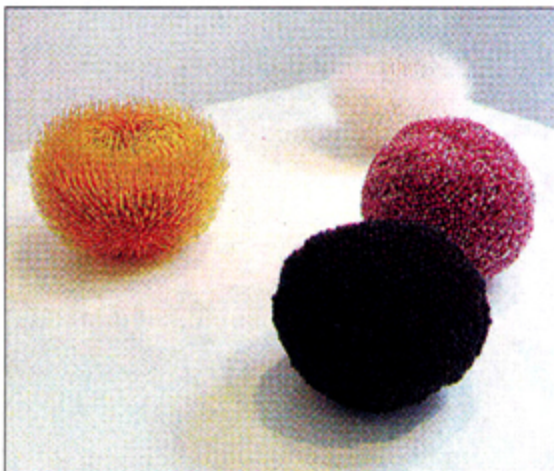
AIDA operates on a \$500,000 annual budget, almost all of which goes into programming. The Andrea & Charles Bronfman Philanthropies cover the executive director's salary and provide an office and other support.

To operate so lean yet accomplish so much "we leveraged every relationship we had," Anderson said.

Those relationships were substantial. Bronfman, whose wife, Andrea, died in January

2006, is a major contributor to Jewish and Israeli causes. The Andersons are well known in museum, art school, gallery and collector circles.

Among the friends who have volunteered their services to AIDA are Aviva Ben Sira, who runs the store and retail gallery at the Eretz Israel Museum in Tel-Aviv; Rivka Saker, director of Sotheby's in Israel; Jane Adlin, an associate curator specializing in contemporary decorative arts at the Metropolitan



Courtesy of Lorch & Seidel Gallery

Dafna Kaffeman's 2006 pieces from the 'Tactual Stimulation' series; glass (flame work) stuck on a silicone base inside. They are named by their colors (black, orange, light rose, lilac).

PALMBEACH³

■ Private preview benefiting the School of the Arts Foundation: 5:30-9:30 p.m. Thursday. For information, call 805-6298.

■ Public show: Friday through Sunday: noon-7 p.m.; Jan. 15: noon-6 p.m.

Where: Palm Beach County Convention Center, 650 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach.

Admission: One-day pass, \$15, with catalog \$25; multi-day pass, \$20, with catalog \$30; students 12-18, \$10; children younger than 12 free when accompanied by an adult.

Catalog: \$15

Details: 209-1308

Museum of Art in New York; and Davira Taragin, director of exhibitions and programs at the Racine Art Museum in Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, the founders weren't idle.

During the 2005 SOFA Chicago, "Doug and Dale came over to the booth and asked if I'd be interested in representing Sergey Bunkov," said dealer Tom Riley, who has known the couple for years.

Riley gave Bunkov a solo exhibition at his gallery in Cleveland in 2006. During the exhibition, Palm Beach-er Sydell Miller hosted a party for about 75 guests at her Cleveland home to introduce them to the artist and AIDA. Riley will exhibit Bunkov's paintings on glass at palmbeach³.

In 2004, when R. Duane Reed organized his first one-woman show of Michal Zehavi's ceramics, Andrea Bronfman flew in for the opening.

Reed recalls listening to her make calls to her friends from the gallery in St. Louis. "This is a piece you should buy," she said. "No, you don't need an image. Just trust me."

Bronfman's efforts paid off. The dealer will present his third solo show of Zehavi's work in the fall, and will feature her and AIDA artist Jacaranda Kori at palmbeach³.

The fourth AIDA artist whose work will be presented at the fair is Dafna Kaffeman, who is represented by Lorch & Seidel Gallery of Berlin.

Russian-born artist Bunkov describes his professional standing in Israel before connecting with AIDA as "like a professional artist in an amateur opera." Exhibitions of his work were few and far between.

Making a living as an artist is particularly difficult for immigrants like him.

"Many artists have lost themselves as artists after immigrating," he said. "You start to work, as you have to feed your family, and the new job sometimes is very far from art."

Bunkov works in a glass factory.

When AIDA's representatives visited his studio in Holon and selected five works for the group's first presentation at SOFA Chicago, "I started to feel that something good will happen to me soon," he said.

Being represented by Riley and having his work exposed to AIDA's network of collectors "is almost an ideal situation," he said. He and his wife will attend palmbeach³ at AIDA's expense.

Things have changed for AIDA as well. After Andrea Bronfman's death, it has had to evolve beyond a mom-and-pop organization.

About 25 people will attend the first meeting of an expanded board Jan. 13 at Bronfman's home. "I hope the board will not only contribute money, but also brains," Bronfman said.

Among the new board members are Palm Beachers Sanford Baklor and his wife, Arlene Kaufman, who have supported AIDA since the beginning. When the Andersons asked them to join the board, "we said 'yes' without hesitation," Baklor said.

The rewards are great, for artists and patrons.

"It feels as though we have developed an entire family in Israel, and we love it," Anderson said.

For information about AIDA, visit www.aidaarts.org or call (212) 931-0089.

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To operate so lean yet accomplish so much 'we leveraged every relationship we had,' said Doug Anderson, shown with wife Dale.