

# This Year, Israeli Artists Join Museum Crafts Show

November 26, 2008 - [Michelle Mostovy-Eisenberg, Staff Writer](#)

Necklaces with beads made of angora wool, jewelry boxes utilizing some of Frank Lloyd Wright's well-known architectural designs, 14-karat-gold-rimmed plates and bowls: These were just some of the objects on display at the annual Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show, which just celebrated its 32nd year as a showcase for some of the best artists in the United States. But, at this year's show, visitors were also able to view -- and purchase -- ornate, but functional or wearable, works of art from Israeli craftspeople.



*Glass bead jewelry by Israeli artist Nirit Dekel*

Each year, the show highlights the work of a particular country as part of its guest-artist program (past years have featured Japan, England, Ireland, Germany, Finland and Canada); this year, it was Israel's turn, which serendipitously occurred during the Jewish state's 60th anniversary, said Erika Vogel, since she noted that the planning was five years in the making.

Vogel is director of the U.S. branch of the Association of Israel's Decorative Arts, based in New York; the nonprofit was founded in 2003 by Charles and Andrea Bronfman, and Dale and Doug Anderson, in the wake of the second intifada, when tourism to Israel plummeted. The organization works to help emerging Israeli artists and "acts as Israel's craft council"; it also fosters artists' development by connecting them to an international audience of galleries, institutions and collectors, mostly in the United States and Europe.

"We really try to help open the international door for these artists," said Vogel. She, along with Aviva Ben-Sira, director of the Tel Aviv branch of AIDA, and a three-person arts jury, helped select the 23 Israeli artists who traveled here.

Proceeds from the show, held Nov. 13-16 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, benefit the museum.

Being able to showcase her work at the Philadelphia Craft Show "is a great opportunity for me," said Gali Cnaani-Sherman, an Israeli textile designer who makes reversible handbags and throw pillows out of 100 percent merino wool.

"I'm proud to be one of this group," she said, "[and] representing our country," so that "other people will know there are Israeli artists."

These artists helped to present a different face of Israel -- something contemporary, hip.

"It's important to expose their work at this show, [and] to get immediate feedback where they stand with international artisans," said AIDA founder Doug Anderson, who noted that many of the Israeli artists earn their living teaching the arts. "It's helping present a positive image of Israel ... and change the perception of Israelis holding a paintbrush [instead of] an Uzzi."

He added that the artists can take back new techniques and ideas to share with their students, as well as the connections they made on their visit here.

"We brought a little bit of Israel," noted Yael Novak, who makes her handcrafted designs out of clay. These include her whimsical interpretation of the classic Hans Christian Andersen story, "The Princess and the Pea," with seven ceramic "pillows" and a bright-orange clay pea peeking out from the bottom one.

"[It was] a window into the whole Israel," said Novak.

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