

Tel Aviv

*Contemporary craft thrives in
a city with a rhythm all its own.*

Craft. Metropolis



STORY BY
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TEL AVIV IS HOME to sun-drenched white beaches and blue-green waters, more than 4,000 Bauhaus-style buildings, and a modern skyline dotted

with boutique hotels and towering office buildings. Amid it all, the city hosts a thriving art scene, where contemporary crafts, particularly jewelry and fiber, stand out.

For textile designer Mika Barr, the city is “a kind of creative and cultural center. It has the rhythm that I really like. I can find suppliers and professionals anywhere, but the unique feeling of the city – that is pretty hard to find.”

Crafts have played a significant role in this land. Artist Boris Schatz founded Bezael School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem in 1906 to encourage a unique Jewish aesthetic. The fashion house Maskit, founded in 1954 by Ruth Dayan, incorporated traditional jewelry, clothing, and home furnishings by skilled artisans into updated designs, which were sold throughout

Israel and abroad. Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art was founded in 1970 to help Israeli industry develop new technologies and products. And in 2001, Bezael (now called Bezael Academy of Arts and Design) opened a new branch – in Tel Aviv – to house its graduate programs in fine arts and photography.

Because of conflict with neighboring countries and internal tensions, makers in Israel have not always received the attention their work merits. Many Tel Aviv makers work from studios where they see clients by appointment only, relying heavily on the internet for exposure. Charles and the late Andrea Bronfman – who witnessed firsthand the declining crafts market during the second intifada – founded AIDA (the Association of Israel’s Decorative Arts) in 2003, with Dale and Doug Anderson, to bolster artists’ visibility. [See “Cross-Cultivation in Israel,” Jun./Jul. 2012.] The organization’s work now includes sponsoring Israeli participation in US museum, craft, and gallery exhibitions.

North Tel Aviv

NORTH TEL AVIV, LARGELY a luxury residential district, is home to the Eretz Israel Museum, an active supporter of Israeli crafts. Beginning in 1998, this museum initiated a contemporary jewelry biennial; biennials followed in ceramics, glass, paper, and this year, a survey of contemporary textiles. Its shop has the most extensive inventory, especially of jewelry, of Tel Aviv museums.



Tel Aviv aerial photo: Paul Chesley, National Geographic, Getty Images / Eretz photos (2): Leonid Padnul, courtesy of Eretz Israel Museum

Central Tel Aviv

CENTRAL TEL AVIV REMAINS the hub for quality crafts and design. At its heart is the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, with its modern and contemporary Israeli and international holdings. Since 2008, it has organized an exhibition for the annual winner of the Andrea M. Bronfman Prize for Contemporary Crafts, known as the “Andy,” established in 2005 by Charles Bronfman to recognize excellence in Israeli jewelry, ceramics, textiles, glass, and fashion.

Nearby is Litvak Gallery, which opened in 2008. Among Israel’s most prominent



Tel Aviv Museum photos (2): Amit Geron / Necklaee photo: Ran Erde

LEFT: Visitors take a gander inside *Lightfall*, the 87-foot, spiralling atrium of the Herta and Paul Amir Building at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

galleries, it represents major glass artists; it is open by appointment only while it prepares to move to a new location.

The neighborhood is also home to notable design galleries, including Talents Design and Periscope. Periscope, established in 1997, augmented its design shows with craft exhibitions several years ago, and it now focuses on work that blurs the boundaries of craft and design. Designer Kedem Sasson has his primary showroom of flowing women’s fashions on Dizengoff Street, one of Israel’s most popular shopping areas; he also maintains a small gallery in South Tel Aviv.

Many internationally renowned artists also live in



Yigal Pardo
Gali Cnaani’s work is influenced by two years of traditional textile study in Japan.

this district. Recognized for her innovative Soma lamps, Ayala Serfaty is excited to be working here after maintaining a studio for many years in a large South Tel Aviv warehouse. “It has been my super wish to live and work in the center of Tel Aviv from an early age,” she says. Similarly, acclaimed bead maker Nirit Dekel, whose colorful jewelry reflects the vitality of the city, mines her surroundings for ideas: “Living in the center of Tel Aviv reflects my personality, and, of course,

influences my work. The intense life, the bright sun, and colorful people are inspiration to me.” Gali Cnaani, known for deconstructing and reconstructing traditional clothing, shares a space with textile artists Shiri Cnaani and Moshe Roas. Roas also uses deconstructed materials, such as burnt and disintegrating fabric and metal.

Central Tel Aviv additionally is home to talented jewelers such as Liat Ginzburg, Dania Chelminsky (whose work was a sensation at the 2013 “Loot” show at New York’s Museum of Arts and Design), and Gregory Larin.

While some Israeli art jewelers use inexpensive, industrial materials, gold remains a staple. Noteworthy goldsmiths include Anat Gelbard, whose jewelry references ancient textiles and architectural detailing; and Shay and Adi Lahover, whose shop, near Sasson’s showroom, features interpretations of traditional Middle Eastern motifs.



Dania Chelminsky makes jewelry using gold and pearls, plus occasionally eggshell and even plant roots.

Contemporary handmade fashion accessories are another highlight of the area. Gelbard, who also designs accessories, offers shoes and handbags with unusual materials such as felt, sterling-silver leaf, and crystals. Accessories by the design house of Daniella Lehavi, the first Israeli designer to offer custom handbag designs, are available in her Rothschild Boulevard boutique. Elsewhere in the neighborhood, Kisim features soft, unstructured bags and wallets handmade in leather and fabric.



ABOVE: The Daniella Lehavi boutique on iconic Rothschild Boulevard.

LEFT: Tel Aviv Museum of Art’s Amir Building.

Courtesy of Daniella Lehavi Personals PR

Neve Tzedek

NEVE TZEDEK, IN SOUTH-western Tel Aviv, is the modern city's oldest neighborhood. Known as an artists' and writers' quarter in the early 20th century, it fell into neglect until gentrification in the 1980s brought upscale restaurants and shops. Although escalating costs have forced out some shops, many makers call it home, including jeweler Ayala Bar, who uses glass beads, nonprecious stones, and rhinestones in her exuberant work, and the Shlush Shloshim Contemporary Ceramics Gallery, a cooperative that features 11 ceramists with work ranging from Yael Novak's functional wares to Hannah Miller's whimsical sculptures.

South Tel Aviv

AN INDUSTRIAL WASTELAND until the 1990s, South Tel Aviv is becoming home to artists who can't keep up with rising real estate prices in Central Tel Aviv and Neve Tzedek. Finding studio spaces in such complexes as the New Central Bus Station, a 1960s-era behemoth that is slowly being repurposed, they join Bezalel and Shenkar graduates and artisans from Africa, China, and Southeast Asia in an alternative art scene.

One of the area's anchors is the Benyamini Contemporary Ceramics Center, which offers instruction for beginners and professionals alike. "When we opened in June 2011, there were



Shlush Shloshim gallery



four contemporary art galleries in the area," director Marcelle Klein notes. "Since then, another four galleries have opened, as well as the Shpilman Institute for Photography. Since we are in the area of contemporary art, ceramics is included in the circuit and we have received a lot of exposure, making the public aware of the broad spectrum of ceramics and its position in art, design, and craft."

Maskit, which closed in 1994, reopened last year in a restored building in South Tel Aviv's 150-year-old American Colony. Sharon and Nir Tal

The Benyamini Contemporary Ceramics Center aims to spark in-depth discussion of ceramic art and design.

have spearheaded the revival, although Nir, its CEO, credits his wife, a former designer of embroidery at London's Alexander McQueen, as the driving force, noting her insistence that Israel have an international fashion house with a strong heritage. Maskit's showroom reflects the revitalized company's approach, offering updated versions of traditional designs.

Jaffa

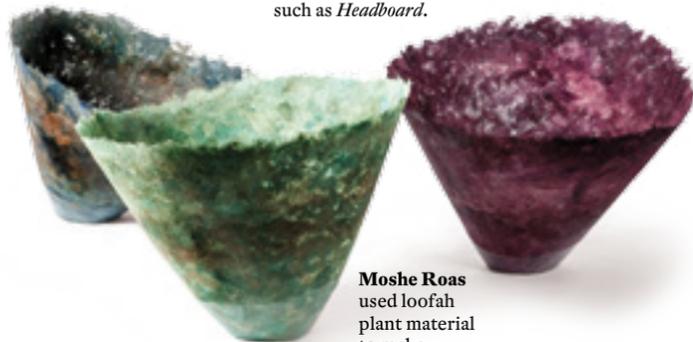
IN 1950, JAFFA AND TEL AVIV merged, officially becoming Tel Aviv-Yafo. This ancient port bordering South Tel Aviv is rapidly becoming another hot spot for contemporary craft and design. Home to design giants such as Yaacov Kaufman, and the team of Dov Ganchrow and the late Ami Drach, Jaffa also is home to a large population of traditionally trained immigrant artisans.

"Collectives of young and established Israeli craftsmen and designers are now springing up in Jaffa's well-known flea market alongside traditional stands filled with Arabic ceramics and metalwork and trendy restaurants," says Jaffa resident Dafna Kaffeman, who heads Bezalel's glass program in Jerusalem. "The young designers as well as those in the South Tel Aviv area collaborate with the immigrant artisans or with small local manufacturers. This is not seen in Central Tel Aviv."

Jaffa also has a number of small craft shops that double as studios. Yael Herman, a jeweler who has shown in American craft shows, closed her Central Tel Aviv gallery two years ago to design sandals in a



Lauri Recanati frequently incorporates flea-market finds into her mosaics, such as *Headboard*.



Moshe Roas used loofah plant material to make these vases.



Maskit's Toga dress, a classic design, was re-released in 2014.



Earrings from Anat Gelbard's Chameleon collection.



Shay Lahover's jewelry blends precious gems and gold.

Tel Aviv Craft Ways

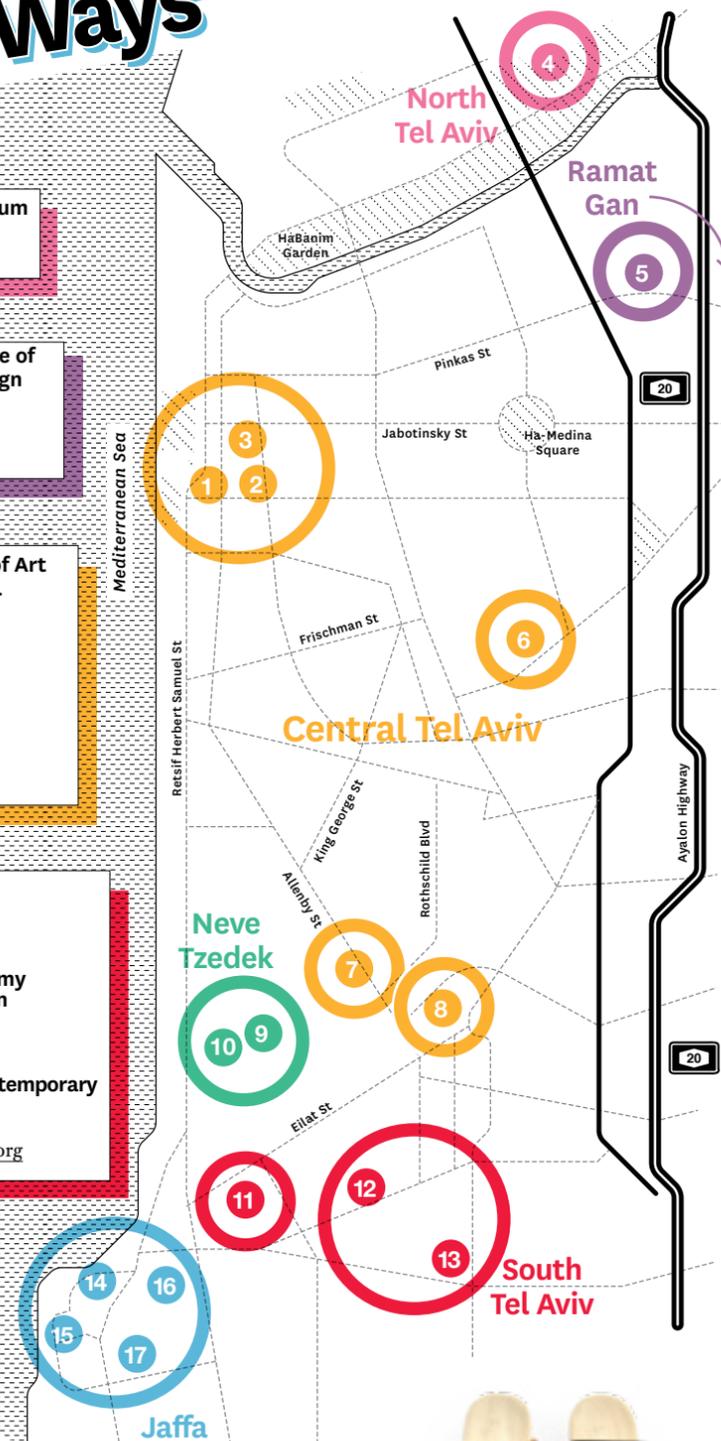
- 1. Periscope
176 Ben Yehuda St.
- 2. Shay & Adi Lahover
203 Dizengoff St.
- 3. Kedem Sasson
213 Dizengoff St.
kedem-sasson.com
- 4. Eretz Israel Museum
2 Haim Levanon St.
eretzmuseum.org.il
- 5. Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art
12 Anne Frank St.
shenkar.ac.il

- 9. Ayala Bar
36 Shabazi St.
ayalabar.com
- 10. Shlush Shloshim gallery
31 Shabazi St.
shlushshloshim.com

- 6. Tel Aviv Museum of Art
27 Shaul Hamelech Blvd.
tamuseum.org.il
- 7. Daniella Lehavi
21 Rothschild Blvd.
daniellelehavi.com
- 8. Kisim
8 HaHashmal St.
kisim.com

- 14. Yael Herman
3 Retsif Ha'alia Hashnia
- 15. Itay Noy
16 Mazal ArieH St.
itay-noy.com
- 16. 8 in Jaffa
13 Rabbi Pinchas St.
facebook.com/8inJaffa
- 17. Asufa
8 Yehuda Margoza
asufadesign.com

- 11. Maskit
4 Auerbuch St.
maskit.com
- 12. Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design
60 Salameh St.
bezalel.ac.il
- 13. Benyamini Contemporary Ceramics Center
17 Ha'amal St.
benyamini ceramics.org



studio/shop along the seashore. Similarly, Andy prizewinner Itay Noy, finding Jaffa "bountiful, inspiring, and welcoming to visitors from all over the world," has a studio/gallery where he creates limited-edition timepieces. Lauri Recanati, a mosaicist, chose to work there "because of all the treasures one can find in its flea market," which she incorporates into her work.

Collectives are adding a fresh approach, presenting works by groups of makers. Asufa, located in Jaffa's flea market, highlights young Israeli designers. The ceramics cooperative 8 in Jaffa is another such venture.

Whatever format prevails in Israel's marketplace in the future, one thing is certain: Tel Aviv is a city to watch.

+ Formerly curator at the Detroit Institute of Arts and Toledo Museum of Art, and director of exhibitions and programs at the Racine Art Museum, Davira S. Taragin is an independent curator. Aviva Ben-Sira is the director of AIDA.



Wooden clogs by Yael Herman reflect her Jaffa sea view.

Benyamini photo: Shai Halevi / Headboard photo: Dror Katz / Fiber photo: Yoav Goren / Gallery photo: Courtesy of Shlush Shloshim gallery
Toga photo: Duddi Hasson / Earrings photo: Dima Valerstein / Rings photo: Erez Ben-Shahar / Clogs photo: Courtesy of the artist