

Exhibition

Paper perfection

The artists whose work is on display in Ticho House's new exhibit have created meticulous three-dimensional installations from a simple, even humble, material

• By LAUREN GELFOND FELDINGER

It's been a long time since paper was just a surface for writing, decorating, drawing or prints. Making objects from paper is long known, especially in Japan, China, Korea and the Philippines, with techniques such as paper-cutting, origami paper folding, lantern-making and papier-mâché.

Paper has become especially "bling" recently, from small objects like sparkly paper ornaments advertised by Martha Stewart, to paper dresses sewn on Project Runway and an entire set at the Chanel Paris couture show in January, adorned with thousands of flowers, leaves, nets and light fixtures, composed of simple, white paper.

Chanel's creative director Karl Lagerfeld had previously hinted that a new age of modesty would follow in the design world on the heels of the world financial crisis. So it may not have come as a shock to see even a Chanel couture dress trimmed with what looked like white paper origami flowers and models with origami hats. Lagerfeld wrote at the time that he loves paper: "Everything starts with paper," he said of how his designs evolve.

At the Ticho House exhibition in Jerusalem, paper is also elevated and fashioned into images and objects from nature and other sources with unexpected results.

But the show asks questions that blur the distinction between design, decoration and fine art, much like the recent "Bizarre Perfection" exhibition at the Israel Museum, to which Ticho House is affiliated. In both shows, the artists use time- and labor-intensive methods to create their graphic, textural works, often with atypical materials. "Paperworks" is a more somber show, with the materials and colors pared down to the minimum.

ON THE first floor of "Paperworks," pristine, dark, earth-colored pinecones lie in a pile. Only from close up is it obvious that the



'Desolation,' 2009, by Yifat Bezael, born 1975. Installation; paper, wood, toothpicks.

Pristine, dark, earth-colored pinecones lie in a pile. Only from close up is it obvious that the cones are handmade

cones are handmade. Ruth Orr spent months using traditional Filipino paper-folding techniques to create individual pine nodules, which interlock to form each pine. An immigrant from England who moved to a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley during childhood, her works often duplicate objects that are displaced from their natural environments.

Yael Goren-Strauss crumpled up Japanese silk paper and used the surface to draw a photo-realistic image of an elephant. The crinkles of the page, ironed by the act of drawing, take the image only subtly out of the two-dimensional sphere, while adding a sensation of luscious, aged elephant skin. Again, the technique can only be seen from close up, inviting the viewer to zoom in on details not

seen in the zoo setting, where Goren-Strauss works part time.

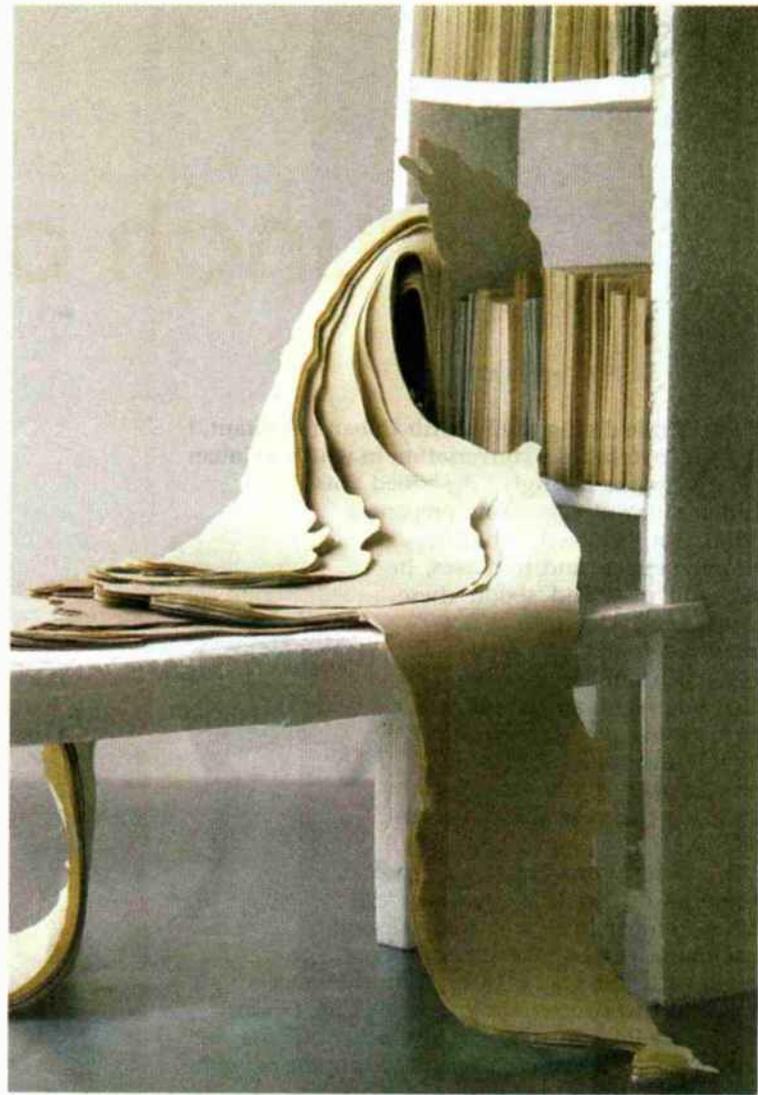
Though most of the works have an obsessive craftiness about them, many are not fashioned with the goal of pictorial realism. There is a large-scale and abstract sculptural installation, *Secrets*, by Efrat Klipshtein and a sound composition made from a recording of crumpling and throwing away paper in *Writer's Block*, by Nelly Agassi and Assaf Evron.

The scores of white flowers, leaves and marsh grasses in Yifat Bezael's installation *Desolation* are graphically pleasing because of their layering and arrangement, but are not created out of precision patterns, like the flowers at the Chanel show or as the works of most of the other artists in the exhibition.

Bezael intentionally laid her installation in a backroom, without painting over the mildew on the walls, to create the feeling of stumbling on an untamed, undiscovered corner of nature, neglected yet beautiful.

Some of the works are visually surprising, like a hand-cut paper window screen in one window and a heap of 3,000 paper wasps in another. Yellow jackets apparently like to nest in window corners, and they grind bark and leaves to a pulp in their mouths to fashion their paper nests.

The making of insects from paper-folding is a relatively recent innovation. Physicist and avid origami-maker Robert Lang, who represents the interest in the last couple of decades of scientists and mathematicians in origami, has said that historically there were no origami insects because it was too complicated to make all the delicate legs with just folding and no cutting. In the 1990s, however, he created a computer program, with input from other scientists, to create intricate and highly sophisticated origami patterns based on geometric theory.



'Paperwork,' 2009, by Maya Zack (born 1976). Installation; paper, wood.

ONE OF the more ambient works in the show, a video installation by Jan Tichy, uses an analog television as the prop, lighting and sound to highlight a minimalist metropolis built on its screen with rows of unadorned paper tubes. If seen properly in the quiet, dark space, with the curtains closed, the light and sound animate the cityscape, much as the lights, shadows, traffic and noise of a city continuously transform any skyline. The work recalls some of the meditative power of the classic black-and-white film *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang.

Two other installations also include movement. At the entrance to Ticho House, in an alcove across from the restaurant, for example, Paul Jackson's electric device imperceptibly works 24 hours a day, timed precisely to take three months to tear one sheet of small paper.

After 12 years of working with two-dimensional prints and drawings on paper, "Paperworks" curator Ronit Sorek set out to explore all the other ways that paper could be used to make fine art. "I'm interested in paper as a medium, not as a surface," she says.

Sorek called the exhibition a contemporary follow-up to a 1974 exhibition at the Israel Museum, curated by Meira Perry-Lehmann. "Above and Beyond" showed works by Israeli conceptual artists who examined paper in the tradition of the Dada and other Conceptual artists who were their predecessors.

"[But] today we don't need to ask questions about paper," she says. "It is just another medium."

"Paperworks," with works by 12 contemporary artists, is showing through June 5 at the Ticho House galleries in Jerusalem, Rehov Harav Kook 9, (02) 624-5068.