



52nd International Art Exhibition

Israeli Pavilion Transformed into Outer Shell of Installation

Yehudit Sasportas: Guardians of the Threshold

Press Release

Representing Israel in the 2007 Venice Biennale is renowned Israeli artist **Yehudit Sasportas'** large-scale installation, **Guardians of the Threshold**. A prominent figure in the international contemporary art scene, prize-winning Sasportas has participated in various group exhibitions worldwide and held a number of solo shows in leading museums and galleries. In "Guardians of the Threshold", the artist uses a variety of media including drawing, painting, sculpture, and architecture, to transform the concrete modernist three-story building of the Israeli Pavilion into a virtual fantasy space, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior.

"Sasportas' artistic practice displays an affinity for modernist architecture, an echo of its "utopian vision" which she absorbed during her childhood in Israel," says **Suzanne Landau**, curator of the Israeli Pavilion. "The space of the Pavilion in Giardini was not only in accord with her interest in modernism, it also became an integral part of the work."

In the pavilion's ground floor a screen with a light-emitting drawing of forests and glades serves as the only source of light in the dark space. On the second floor, an image of an enigmatic landscape with a swamp is projected on an imaginary "hole" in the wall, creating an illusionist view which stretches beyond the surface of the wall. In the adjacent gates, two paintings featuring fragmental geometric shapes and structures reveal the only urban images on view. The image of the swamp is echoed in a large three-dimensional sculpture on the top floor, with large thin needles coming out of it and a reflection of the clearing of the forest depicted in the painting next to it. A monumental modernist facade with windows and drawings portraying reflections of trees covers the structure's highest wall, encompassing all

three floors. The installation is interwoven with architectural elements serving as means of entrance and exit which undermine the defined limits of the building's inner space.

In "Guardians of the Threshold", Sasportas juxtaposes various conflicting identities and meanings—East and West, nature and culture, rationality and spirituality—and embodies tensions between the modernist, formal sculptural structure and the emotional and painterly one. The artists' fascination with modernist architecture, as seen in the precise construction of doors, windows and gates using a strict minimal language, is simultaneously contrasted by the dark, shaded space and mysterious atmosphere in the pavilion, resembling the interior of a metaphysical cave.

In each of Sasportas' drawings, different methods blend together in a process of hybridization. Every work is based on the concrete experience of her encounter with nature, combined with intuitive work relying on memory and drawings of organic elements she brings into the studio. The use of technological devices in her drawings is manifest in the integration of computer-based visual representations of sounds recorded by the artist in nature. The merging of diverse sources and approaches results in the creation of Sasportas' multi-layered works.

The installation is accompanied by an English-Hebrew-German catalogue.