

OZ's

IN / OUT OFF / ON Survey: 40 Years of Art

Avital OZ

October 17 – December 6, 2009

Reception: *Saturday, October 17, 4-6:00 PM*

At

art sites

651 West Main Street (Route 25), Riverhead, New York 11901 T: 631- 591-2401
<http://www.artsitesgallery.com>

Gallery Hours: Thursday –Sunday, 12-5 PM.
For group tour information and additional hours call 631-591-2401

This exhibit displays work created over a forty-year period by the artist Avital Oz. Oz has spent the summer gradually installing and creating a body of work in metal, stone, wood, rubber, and post forms on the two-acre site. On October 17th, he will also display works in both galleries, ranging from delicately embossed prints to three-dimensional wall sculptures.

Born in 1942 at the kibbutz Mishmar ha'emek, Israel, Avital Oz grew up in an atmosphere of creativity grounded in the soil as well as arts and sciences. In 1965-1966 he studied painting and graphics at the Avni Insitute of Fine Artes, Tel Aviv. During a year spent in Mexico City (1967), he studied drawing and etching with Trinidad Osorio, drawing and fresco with Miguel Carmona. He was invited by David Alfaro Siquvaros to assist in his mural work. Oz had his first one-person show at Galleria Salazar, Mexico City, featuring works focused on the bullfight ring and the Mexican people. In 1968 Avital Oz studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where he was exposed to and entranced by Paul Waldman, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt, Milton Glaser, David Winrieb, and Robert Ryman. Here he committed his primary efforts to sculpture. Sol LeWitt gave two weeks of his exhibition time at 112 Greene Street to Oz for the display of the original wooden Step Forward (reconstructed at *art sites*). At Yale University Richard Serra, Robert Morris, and David Von Schlagle created a stimulating environment. In 1973, the same year Oz received his BFA and MFA from Yale University's School of Art and Architecture, Oz won a competition for a public commission with a steel variation of *Step Forward*, which was installed in a senior housing project redesigned by Charles Moore. Its shape is meant to convey activity, literally walking, as encouragement to dynamic aging. A wooden version of this piece is installed on *art sites*'s upper plaza as part of this show. As described by Oz, it is "a different dance in a different place" while evoking the

essence of the past piece. Oz has reinterpreted other pieces from his early years, including Brick Sun, originally installed in an old shipyard in New Haven, Connecticut. Now a version sits near the banks of the Peconic River, evocative of the sun's imprint on the grass. It is modest and monumental, linking his love of the eternal nature of Israel's landscape to the East Coast environs. He describes his own works as fields of steel, orchards of stone and roads of wood.

After graduating, Avital Oz decamped for New York City, showing consistently at O.K. Harris with one-man shows from 1974 until 1981, then again in 2007. He has also shown his work in France, Spain, Columbia and Israel, as well as at the Elaine Benson Gallery in Bridgehampton. The urban setting of NYC sparked his interest in steel. The Square, 1972 was moved from Pratt's campus to *art sites* for this show. The steel structures, including Linkage, 1980, soften the harsh reputation of the industrial age, with their transparency, sense of movement, and utopian underpinnings. The Tabernacle of Peace, 1981, with its two swings, represents the desire of Oz for Israeli and Palestinian people to silence their guns, open dialogues and live peacefully side by side. First inspired by Brancusi's endless column in Rumania, Oz seeks to create an endless column that evokes femininity and changing profiles, as well as traditional male power. Both exterior and interior versions will be on view.

This year Oz had a large-scale environmental piece formed from six tons of hay in the show "Between Sky and Earth," at Park Dina, Arsuf, Israel. Another of Oz's sculptures graces the grounds of the iconic Gwathmey Residence and Studio in Amagansett. Avital Oz dedicates this exhibit to Charles Gwathmey's memory.

ARTIST STATEMENTS

A. Art is a tool, the tool in enriching human perception!

Human perception is a leverage point, which will allow mankind one day to not only move the earth- but rather negotiate an entire universe.

(Oz, Feb 1981, with exhibit At P.S.I. L.I.C. N.Y.)

B. Thesis: " The moment I conceive the "Visual idea" my work is done. Any of my assistants can execute the work of art as well as I do or better."

(Sol Lewit ,conceptualist)

Antithesis: Show me this evil, show me this conceptual art - and I'll chop it to non existence. To order as God-work as a slave. The work itself and its visual result are the only values.

(Constantine Brancusi, with wood-carving ax in hand, Paris studio.)

Synthesis: During the actual process of work, in challenging visualization of an idea I'm not only executing while adding, subtracting, correcting and refining a work of art into meaningful existence, but many times finding and arriving at a totally new beginning.

(Oz, Artistic thinking)

C. My art is a summery result of the entire cumulative human experience and knowledge: from history, philosophy via mathematics, poetry and music etc. Yet it is about nothing else but itself- ART!

(In an interview for "Art in America" 1992)